

varied witchery of his powers, and courts with the fascination of his address, leaving the learned astonished with his proficiency, and the ladies enraptured with his grace, and communicating, wherever he went, the love and spirit of gladness—he was, and well deserved to be, the idol of the age he lived in. He appeared to be a good in which all nations considered themselves to be interested—not the partial and sole property and product of one people, but an universal benefaction, given and intended for all, and in the glory and honour of which all had a right to be partakers. His death, therefore, was lamented by every court he had visited; and, to do honour to his memory, kings clad themselves in the habiliments of grief, and universities poured forth their tribute of academical sorrow."

The "Arcadia," immediately on its publication, "was received with unbounded applause. To this, many causes contributed—the high reputation of the author, his rank, his bravery, his unfortunate and premature death, and the real excellence of the work. The ladies were desirous of perusing what might be considered as the testament of so accomplished a courtier; the nobility regarded with eagerness the production of him who was their model and pattern; and the scholars turned with respect to the words of one who was equally qualified to shine in a college or a court. Thus the 'Arcadia' became the favourite promptry and text-book of the public: from it was taken the language of compliment and love: it gave a tinge of similitude to the colloquial and courtly dialect of the time, and from thence its influence was communicated to the lucubrations of the poet, the historian, and the divine."

"The conceits and quaintnesses of Sir Philip Sidney's language had their origin from the Italian school," Spenser, who died in 1598, also was one, whose influence upon his own time was great, and immediate. In his "Epithalamium," the English language seems, at once to have acquired new power, and the admiration of the "Faery Queen" was unanimous and enthusiastic. "It became," says a celebrated critic, "the delight of every accomplished gentleman, the model of every poet, the solace of every scholar." The same age displayed a remarkable fondness for music. Homer was translated by Chapman, and Tasso by Fairfax. But it was in the drama, that this period was most distinguished. The Italian dramatic literature of the 16th century, according to Mr. Hallam, was deeply imbued with the horrible; spectral apparitions, murder, and cruelty were the ingredients; and the same age was eminent in pastoral poetry. The influence of Italian literature is strongly evident in Shakespeare, and the plots of several of his plays were taken directly from the Italian. The pedantry of the day indulged in quotations from Italian, and classic authors. The knowledge of one part of the world, of what was going on in another, was much more accurate than we are in the habit of supposing; and it was much fostered by the correspondence, amongst literary men and artists, of which so many specimens are preserved.

Such, then, being the position of society, in manners and in literature, art had readily infused into it a similar Italian character. It gained much of the Italian magnificence, in its long terraces, and steps, and its gardens; these were the striking features of the peninsular style; and it was those features which necessarily dwell most upon the recollections of the traveller,—for what he was unable to supply, he could only recur to the almost disused architecture of his country; and the imitations of the orders were uncouth, and without merit. Grotesque forms, and curves without elegance; bunches of carrots for ornament, and windows, bearing an immense proportion to the size of the front, were the striking characteristics of Elizabethan architecture. Where Italian architects were employed, they seem to have been the worst, that could be selected, or to have been entirely forgotten the details of their own style.

The elegance and refinement, the Italian impress of the Elizabethan age, were but partially reflected in the architecture: the skill of the artists of that day was insufficient to execute, what their patrons contemplated. They succeeded in reflecting little more than that pedantic affectation, that love of the quaint and the singular, which was but one of its characteristics.

E. H.

ENGLISH AND FOREIGN GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE COMPARED.

BY SIR JOHN AUBREY.*

MR. RICKMAN has attributed more pure simplicity and boldness of composition to Gothic architecture in England than elsewhere. My acquaintance with Continental models is (I regret to say) very slight; but I think I can see that he is right, and can point out one or two leading points in which our architecture is more pure, and one or two external circumstances which, though they could not create the genius or the taste, might leave them more free to work out the unadulterated result of their own principles. I do not speak of the Romanesque period, during which our Norman architects were probably, both in art and in time, behind their countrymen on the Continent; nor (on account of my own ignorance of the Flamboyant) of the latest period, when I must think that architecture, however increasingly subservient to use and luxury, after the day of Wykeham, was on the decline as an æsthetic art. For the peculiar principles I only refer to the Master of Trinity, in whose observations on Rickman I shall strictly concur when, but not before, I have added to them, that it was himself who inspired with a living soul the nascent body produced by the patient and acute inductions of Rickman, and which has since advanced so far towards adolescence.

The favouring circumstances which strike me are, first, the comparative freedom from private war and local disorder, and, secondly, the comparative want of Roman works. Private war and local disorder would have far greater tendency than public, even though they were civil conflicts, to waste and destroy local monuments, and consequently, to cause that sense of insecurity, which will prevent their frequent and familiar construction: hence, to prevent the art from becoming inbred in the minds, and apparently indigenous in the soil of the country. One who twenty years ago had the early thin edition of Rickman in his pocket wherever he travelled, has a right to say that every little village church, which has been spared by time, and churchwardens, proves such to be the case in England.

The same insecurity which would prevent the frequent construction, would thwart that construction when it took place. Protection would be necessary, even to the detriment of their architectural ends. This requires no proof, but I imagine it to be illustrated in passing along the high road through Herefordshire and Western Shropshire—border counties, where, I fancy, I see more than their proportion of rude and naked bulk in Early-English and Early-Decorated towers; but where, when the victories of Edward I. had given free scope to the arts of peace, I certainly observe more than I have myself been elsewhere used to of the prevalence of quiet and humble structures of the Decorated style.

It may be objected that the turbulent reign of Henry III. was that which produced the glory of our native art, the early English, so pre-eminently, if not quite peculiarly our own. The reign of Henry III. was turbulent; but not so much so as it appears to posterity, in whose eye its half century appears as a unit by the side of shorter reigns. Nor were its wars private, whatever human intermixture of private violence they may have involved. They were wars of public principle. A weak reign afforded the opportunity, whilst it succeeded to one whose united weakness and violence called forth the necessity of claiming that increased public liberty, for which the social improvement of the nation was ripening it. The age of Magna Charta is no less appropriately the age of early English art, than the matured excellence of decorations coincides with the settlement of our Parliamentary constitution under Edw. I.

The student of Hallam and Fortescue, the best concise expositors of our laws and liberties, and our consequent national greatness, will probably, with me, divide the actual production of our happier state of things between Norman prerogative and Saxon liberty—the superincumbent pressure of the crown having prevented the well-compacted social economy of the humbler frames from being broken up as elsewhere (if elsewhere it existed) by the

all-pervading violence of the military tenants. It being important to me to assume the fact, I may be excused in thus digressing to account for it, in order to make it credible to those impressed with a general idea of the lawlessness of that age.

The favourable effect of the absence of Roman works of art will be two-fold. The eye will be less distracted by a beauty depending not only on different but on antagonist principles; and the architect will not be tempted, or required by his employers to impair the free and pure development of his own style, by the use of materials (particularly old columns) too precious to be rejected, yet difficult to be adapted.

These two drawbacks have effectually prevented the formation in Italy (except, perhaps, at Naples) of a school, though there was long a fashion, of pointed Gothic architecture in that country. This is conclusively shown by the splendid work of Gally Knight—the more conclusively, as it was not his object to draw the conclusion. I must not be considered as undervaluing, except in the single particular of the purity of Gothic art, the edifices of other countries. I can tolerate those who may consider the French or German, who make nearer approaches to purity than the Italians, as on the whole our superiors in great edifices; and even in Italy I can admire sometimes even more than my judgment can approve; and I may both approve and admire a work not Gothic, but *not generic*. The matchless splendour of Milan pleases a cultivated taste the less because it is manifestly intended to be, what yet it is not, purely Gothic. That gem, the Capella della Spina, at Pisa, wants in its outlines the truthfulness of Gothic art; but he must be such a master of language as I am not, who can find words adequately, yet soberly, to extol the cathedral of Florence. It is neither classical, nor Romanesque, nor modern Roman, nor Gothic; but, with much of the breadth and expansion upon earth of the school founded on classic art, it carries the eye and the mind up to heaven, and onward towards the unseen, in the truest spirit of the romantic. We scarcely need be told that its wonderful cupola is the first, in order to look upon it as the most admirable of its kind which the country produced. Yet we must come home to Salisbury, Beverley, Westminster, Tintern, Lincoln, York, and Winchester. I place them in the chronological order of the style to which (of the many which most of them contain) I attribute in each the leading effect,—Early English pure—Early English, with all the later styles admirably harmonized to it—Early English, verging on Decorated—Early English, passing into Decorated, Decorated and Perpendicular.

I must not be supposed to be laying down rules without exceptions, that what I have been impressed with on the prevalent taste ought to be admitted by others to be so. I have not time, nor indeed materials to prove—perhaps I may be wrong, but if I am not, it is still a chance—whether their recollections of objects seen without any such idea having been suggested to them, will bear me out, or whether if my observations should be honoured with a place in their recollection, they will be confirmed by their future experience. In English Gothic we have scarcely any where but at Canterbury the column substituted for the pier. Now, in every one's eye and mind, whether he have expressed it in words or not, the pier is subordinate to the arch, but the column cannot be made subordinate to the intercolumniation. The column, where it exists, is always the thing dwelt upon, and the intercolumniation, be it arched or not, dwindles into the mere form which the column does not fill. This is contrary to the primary canon that Gothic is the architecture of interiors, in which the supporting parts are subordinate to the contained space.

In the eastern apse which our pointed architects scarcely ever constructed except at Westminster, or even adorned except at Tewkesbury, I am inclined to admit that where it does not lead to narrow and wire drawn proportions, our continental neighbours have an advantage over us; but in the long west window, so comparatively rare in the French west fronts, we have an immeasurable advantage—it makes our great front more one, more ascending, more indicative of the con-

* Read at the late Winchester Meeting.